

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 206457

50

ORIGIN EA-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-06 ISO-00 /014 R

66604

DRAFTED BY EA/RA:JHENDERSON:CHG

10/18/73

APPROVED BY EA/RA:CCHAPMAN

EA/TB:VTHOMSETH

----- 012017

O 181405Z OCT 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 206457

FOR NETHERCUT FROM CHAPMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO

SUBJECT: NATO FAR EAST EXPERTS MEETING - THAILAND
DEVELOPMENTS

FOLLOWING SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO CHIANG MAI UDORN DIA
WASHDC FROM BANGKOK 16 OCT 73:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 16206

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TH

SUBJ: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF HOW THE THANOM GOVERNMENT WENT
WRONG

SUMMARY: THE COLLAPSE OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT
RESULTED FROM TRAGIC MISHANDLING OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS.
BEHIND THIS WAS THE LOSS OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN RTG ABILITY
TO MANAGE THE COUNTRY, POPULAR CONTEMPT FOR OFFICIAL
CORRUPTION, AND AN INCREASINGLY ARTICULATED DESIRE AMONG
THE INTELLECTUAL AND STUDENT ELITE FOR DEMOCRATIC REPRESENT-
ATION IN NATIONAL POLITICS. THE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO UNDER-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 206457

STAND OR COPE WITH THE GROWING STUDENT MOVEMENT WHICH WAS

THE VANGUARD FOR MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RESIGNATION OF THE THANOM CABINET AND THE DEPARTURE OF THE PRINCIPALS FROM THAILAND CAPPED AN ESCALATING DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT THIS YEAR. THE RICE SHORTAGE AND THE RISING COST OF RICE UNDERMINED THE PUBLIC'S BELIEF IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO MANAGE THE ECONOMY. THE THUNG YAI HUNTING SCANDAL REVIVED OLD CHARGES OF HIGH LEVEL CORRUPTION, AND THANOM'S EXPLANATION THAT THE HUNTERS HAD BEEN ON A SECRET GOVERNMENT MISSION INSULTED THE INTELLIGENCE OF EDUCATED THAIS.

2. AS PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE CABINET'S ABILITY TO GOVERN DECLINED, THE PUBLIC INCREASINGLY RESENTED ITS OWN INABILITY TO AFFECT GOVERNMENT POLICY OR EVEN VOICE ITS DISSATISFACTION THROUGH LEGAL CHANNELS. THE NOVEMBER 1971 COUP AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION HAD REMOVED EVEN THE FACADE OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT. INCREASING USE OF ARTICLE 17 OF THE INTERIM CONSTITUTION CREATED AN IMPRESSION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PUNISHING ITS OPPONENTS UNJUSTLY.

3. PUBLIC DISCONTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT BRED PERSONAL RESENTMENT AGAINST THANOM, PRAPHAT, AND NARONG, ESPECIALLY THE LATTER TWO. PRAPHAT'S PUBLIC IMAGE HAS NEVER BEEN GOOD, AND HE BECAME A NATURAL TARGET FOR POPULAR RESENTMENT WHEN THINGS WENT BAD. NARONG'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP TO BOTH THANOM AND PRAPHAT, HIS COCKY PRONOUNCEMENTS ON EVERY FACET OF PUBLIC POLICY, AND THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF, RIGHTLY OR WRONG, THAT THANOM AND PRAPHAT WERE GROOMING HIM AS THEIR SUCCESSOR INCREASED PUBLIC SUSPICION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS RULING FOR THE BENEFIT OF A SMALL FAMILY CLIQUE RATHER THAN FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS PATERNALISM MAY HAVE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS DOING WHAT WAS BEST FOR THE COUNTRY, IT FAILED TO CONVINCE THE PUBLIC.

4. GROWING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND SUSPICION OF ITS MOTIVES PLAYED INTO THE HANDS OF THAILAND'S CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 206457

STUDENT LEADERS, WHO DURING THIS YEAR USED THEMES SUCH AS ALLEGED JAPANESE DOMINATION OF THE ECONOMY, THE THUNG YAI SCANDAL, AND THE RICE SHORTAGE TO INCREASE THE POLITICAL ACTIVISM OF STUDENTS AND TO GARNER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THEIR MOVEMENT. THE EXPULSION OF SIX RAMKHAMHAENG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN JUNE FOR CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT SET OFF A LARGE STUDENT DEMONSTRATION IN BANGKOK, WHICH RECEIVED WIDESPREAD POPULAR SUPPORT AND, FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO

YIELD TO STUDENT DEMANDS (BANGKOK 9756). EVEN AFTER THIS UNPRECEDENTED EVENT, THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO UNDERESTIMATE THE DETERMINATION OF STUDENTS TO PRESS FOR A CHANGE TO A MORE REPRESENTATIVE FORM OF GOVERNMENT. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT ARRESTED 12 PERSONS, (A 13TH WAS ARRESTED LATER), INCLUDING STUDENTS AND LECTURERS, FOR HANDING OUT PAMPHLETS URGING A MORE RAPID PROMULGATION OF A CONSTITUTION AND CHARGED THEM WITH PLOTTING THE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT, HUGE DEMONSTRATIONS RESULTED. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT FINALLY AGREED TO ACCEPT THE STUDENTS' DEMAND FOR THE UNCONBITIONAL RELEASE OF THOSE ARRESTED AND PROMISED A CONSTITUTION BY OCTOBER 1974, SUSPICION OF THE GOVERNMENT HAD RISEN TO THE POINT THAT MANY STUDENTS WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S WORD AND GO HOME.

5. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE SURVIVED THE LATEST STUDENT CRISIS EXCEPT FOR THE SHOOTING OF STUDENTS BY SECURITY FORCES OCTOBER 14, HOWEVER. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO AVOID OPENING FIRE, POLICE FINALLY PANICKED UNDER THE STRAIN OF CONTROLLING THE HOSTILE STUDENT MOB AND PROBABLY UNDER SOME PROVOCATION AS WELL. THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION, FOLLOWING THE FIRST SHOOTINGS, TO BRING IN THE ARMY TO RESTORE ORDER INCREASED THE THREAT AND THE ACTUALITY OF VIOLENCE, AND PUBLIC OUTRAGE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT FORCED THE RESIGNATION OF THE CABINET IN SHORT ORDER. EVEN THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW PRIME MINISTER DID NOT SATISFY MANY STUDENTS, WHO REFUSED TO DISPERSE UNTIL THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND OF THANOM, PRAPHAT AND NARONG.

6. IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE, WE WILL, TO THE EXTENT THIS CAN BE DONE, ASSESS WHAT HAPPENED IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY DURING THOSE FEW CRUCIAL DAYS WHICH TOPPLED A GOVERNMENT. UNGER
UNQUOTE KISSINGER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 206457

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE206457
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JHENDERSON:CHG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS UNGER
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731024/aaaaarfs.tel
Line Count: 154
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Aug-2001 by elyme>; APPROVED <26-Sep-2001 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NATO FAR EAST EXPERTS MEETING - THAILAND DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PFOR, NATO
To: NATO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005